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ABSTRACT

This newsletter describes mentoring programs that have been successful in improving the academic achievement of at-risk African American youth. "Mentors Play Role in League's Education Push" (J. E. Jacob) describes the key role of mentors in the Urban League's Education Initiative. "Mentoring: Effective for Youth" (L. Sullivan) discusses the importance of adult role models in helping disadvantaged young African-American adolescents make important educational and career choices. "Rhode Island Program Targets At-Risk Students" uses a case study to describe the mentor-mentee relationships developed in a Providence (Rhode Island) program. "Role Models Important for African-American Youth" (L. Edmonson) discusses the need for role models to help African-American youth develop positive expectations. "Church-Based Group Helps Young Males" describes a health promotion program for African-American boys in the District of Columbia. "Florida Group Encourages African-American Excellence" describes a program that uses parents as mentors to foster high achievement. "Aim High" (G. E. Curry) emphasizes that mentors must have high expectations of their mentees. "Mentoring Has Group Focus in Michigan Program" describes a Flint (Michigan) program that uses a group approach and peer counseling. "PBS Mentoring Documentary Now Available" describes an hour-long videotape about mentoring. "From Doubt to Friendship" (M. B. Maxwell) describes the mentor-mentee relationship from the student's perspective. An 11-item bibliography is appended. (FMW)

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A SPECIAL REPORT ON MENTORING

PLUS FROM PROJECT PLUS AND THE NATIONAL URBAN LEAGUE, INC.

Mentoring is becoming a component of many youth-oriented professions and programs across the country; it is proving to be an effective way to provide adult guidance for young people who need it.

The Public Broadcasting Service (PBS)—partner with the Capital Cities/ABC television network in a long-term national literacy promotion effort called PLUS (Project Literacy U.S.)—is working to call attention to mentoring as a means not only to literacy and academic achievement but also to career and self-esteem goals for young people. To that end, PBS created a mentoring project called "One PLUS One." A documentary by that name aired on PBS last fall, and current related activities include a series of newsletters designed to show important American organizations how mentoring can work—and, ideally, to encourage those organizations and their members to create and support mentoring programs in their own arenas.

Mentors Play Role in League's Education Push

By John E. Jacob
President
National Urban League, Inc.

In 1986, the National Urban League launched a nationwide effort to increase the academic achievement of African-American and other minority and poor students in the United States.

The effort mobilizes African-American communities to take responsibility for developing an educational ethos in Urban League cities. Today, the Education Initiative involves all 113 Urban League communities and more than 200,000 students and parents.

A linchpin of the Initiative is connecting students with adults—and one of the most effective connections is mentoring: one-to-one or small-group activity that connects young people with adult role models who can give them guidance in academic work and/or in life skills.

Mentoring programs provide adults with the opportunity to bring their personal life experiences to students. Volunteer mentors—many of whom are not parents themselves—view mentoring as an opportunity to make a difference in the life of a youngster.

In education, mentoring has been formalized to describe a specific relationship between a student and an adult. The overall goals of educational mentoring are to increase student achievement in education, to facilitate long- and short-term goal-setting, to develop decision-making skills applicable both in and out of the school setting, and to enhance the student's social development.

Mentoring is of particular value in the African-American community. Historically, mentoring relationships have played a major role in the African and African-American cultures. The relationship between male adolescents and adult "coaches" was particularly important in the African community. Formal rites of passage for young African boys involved the older men of the community.

In post-Reconstruction America, African-Americans migrating to the north were often met by family and friends, many of whom served as mentors, facilitating employment and educational opportunities.

Today's social and economic developments have resulted in a changing support structure for parents and students in our communities, with fewer opportunities for informal mentoring. The sixty-one mentoring programs in place in Urban League communities attempt to fill that gap—and they are working.

Mentored students gain a stronger sense of belonging and increased self-esteem, and they perform better academically. Through the mentoring process, students are exposed to a wider range of career options. For example, the Tomorrow's Scientists and Technicians Program gives students the opportunity to interact with mentors who are scientists, mathematicians, and engineers. For many of the students, the relationship with a scientist who "looks like me" is a new experience; it illustrates that a career in science is indeed possible for African-Americans.

The mentor relationship has also enhanced students' ability to develop strong values. With their mentors as examples, students make more conscious decisions about drug use, sexuality, pregnancy, and peer pressure.

Adults in Urban League communities have made a commitment to their children and have assumed the responsibility for working with them during their formative years. With the Urban League as the catalyst, adult volunteer mentors have decided not to write off the future of our young people, but instead to help make a difference in their lives.

Working together, we can make a difference.

Mentor Program Elements

There are seven basic elements in a successful mentoring program. (1) Mentors and mentees are matched by needs and resources. (2) Mentors are committed to providing consistency, caring, and concrete help for at least one year. (3) The goal is to help mentees develop self-confidence and independence. (4) Both mentors and mentees benefit and learn. (5) There is a support system in place for mentors and mentees. (6) The parents of the mentees are involved and supported in their role. (7) The program is evaluated to determine its impact over time.

—Adapted from "Mentoring Manual," published by the Abell Foundation, Baltimore, MD

Mentoring: Effective for Youth

By Louis Sullivan
United States Secretary of Health and Human Services

For young Americans today, adolescence begins earlier than in any previous generation, and youths ages 10, 11, and 12 can and do make choices that will affect the rest of their lives.

When youngsters are poor, members of a minority, or new to our country, they are at special risk. Too often, those youths have few successful adult role models, attend the weakest schools, have

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poor health services, and have fewer clear avenues to opportunities in the mainstream.

But when these youngsters receive support from a mature, caring adult—that is, a mentor—they are more likely to finish high school and to hold a job. These behavior changes are significant, especially for young blacks, who need to make serious choices that will greatly affect their outcome as adults. Often they are overwhelmed by feelings of hopelessness. What's needed is a positive relationship with an adult who can help them understand how to fit into the mainstream of everyday life.

Through mentoring, black leaders can provide the guidance, encouragement, and support that young people need to increase their options for more productive lives.

Dr. Sullivan's comments are adapted from his introduction to a new videotape called "Mentoring African-American Youth." The 20-minute video, excerpted from the acclaimed PBS mentoring documentary "One PLUS One," is available at cost. For further information, or to place an order, call or write Project PLUS, 4802 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213. (412) 622-1491.

Rhode Island Program Targets At-Risk Students

Two years ago, Tracie was a prime candidate for dropping out of school. She was failing several subjects and was absent much of the time. Today, thanks to the efforts of her mentor and the Urban League of Rhode Island's Education Initiative program, Tracie is a different person—she's a high school graduate, takes college preparatory classes, and hopes to pursue a career in nursing.

Tracie is a good example of the work of the Education Initiative, a program that targets borderline students from five Providence public schools. Participants are identified by teachers and school counselors because they have had a fair record in the past, but now are failing one or more subjects, are missing school regularly, and are at risk of dropping out. Since the program's inception three years ago, 100 students have been mentored.

"We match each student with a mentor who serves as a role model—in most cases a volunteer from the black community—through the use of an interest questionnaire," says Kai Cameron, program coordinator. "We're hoping that students, with the help of a role model, can begin to recognize the importance of education, broaden their life experiences, and develop goals."

Although mentors are asked to commit to spending one year with their students, 25 percent of the mentor/mentee teams have stayed in contact after the program ends. Tracie, now 19 years old, and her mentor, Sybil Bailey, are one such team.

Bailey, a human resources personnel analyst, became involved with Tracie when she was a junior in high school. Tracie needed a "big sister" who could give her extra guidance, and Sybil was the answer.

"Sybil and I hit it off right away," says Tracie. "I'm the kind of person who wants to give up when I don't get things right the first time. Sybil has helped see me through these times and has taught me to have trust and honesty within myself. If I make up an excuse, she'll say, 'Don't give me that,' because she knows—she's been there."

As Tracie has grown older, her discussions with Bailey have evolved to include the challenges of college. "My mother is very helpful," says Tracie, "but there are certain things I just can't talk to her about, like college. No one in my family has been to college—I'm the first."

Although Bailey is reluctant to offer other mentors a formula for success, she says it helps that she and Tracie share common interests and that Tracie admires and strives for a lifestyle similar to hers.

Finding mutual interests is something that mentor Lorraine Adams would like to pursue with her student, Lynn, but Lorraine's more immediate goal is to help the 15-year-old become more interested in learning about new things.

"I've tried to get Lynn interested in school by exposing her to different experiences and by talking about the places I've visited and what I've learned," says Lorraine, an accountant and president of the Urban League's Guild. "We've also gone rollerskating and to college basketball games, and she's been to my home and met my family. But I did have to say to her, 'Now you have to make some promises to me, such as attending school.' Lynn's a bright, intelligent girl, and I believe she will perform well if she changes her attitude."

In cases such as Lynn's, where ancillary services may eventually be required, the Urban League provides additional resources. An after-school tutorial program supplements the mentoring component and enables students to work one-on-one with volunteers from area colleges and universities. A training program also is offered, with mentors strongly encouraged to attend. The training focuses on providing information and helping mentors develop skills to work effectively with adolescents. Program staff and volunteers from the Education Initiative Task Force provide support and, when special problems or issues arise, an Urban League education specialist is available to intervene.

Although support services are critical for some kids, the key to most relationships is simply making a conscious effort and taking the time to touch base. Sybil Bailey says, "Time is the key, and it doesn't take a whole lot of it to make a difference."

For further information, contact Kai Cameron, Program Coordinator, Urban League of Rhode Island, 246 Prairie Avenue, Providence, RI 02905. (401) 351-5000

Role Models Important For African-American Youth

By Lonnie Edmonson
Manager, Fannie Mae Incentive Scholarship Program
Washington, DC

There was a time when I didn't know what it meant for a man to be a role model. Yet, during some of the most important times of my life, I was surrounded by them.

There was Mr. Glanton, the insurance salesman who lived down the block. And Mr. Bible, the successful lawyer, who lived in the only detached house in a development of semi-detached houses in Northeast Washington, DC. There was Mr. Tate, the grocery store manager who had risen to a position of responsibility after beginning as a warehouse worker. And there was his next-door neighbor, Mr. Garran, a poet and jazz musician. Next door, on either side of our house,

Fannie Mae mentor Leroy Swinton, left, and his H.D. Woodson Senior High protege, Alonzo Patterson, enjoy an event at the Kennedy Center.

lived Mr. Taylor, a retired postman with an impeccably groomed garden, and Mr. Williams, a tirelessly working CPA from Trinidad. And there was my uncle, the architect, and my dad, a career civil servant.

These men didn't live glamorous lives—at least I don't remember them as glamorous. They rose early, they worked late, and their weekends were often too short or too full of the day-to-day responsibilities that go with being husbands and fathers. But they were there, and there were many of them. They were—for me and for a generation of African-American males in the '50s and '60s—our role models and our mentors.

"Inter-generational mobility"—that's what sociologists call it—is the process of providing the nurturing, security, and direction that allow sons and daughters to move a rung up the socioeconomic ladder and achieve more than their parents achieved. My peers and I never doubted, growing up in "the real" Washington, DC, that we would go further in our lives than our parents. We never doubted it because they expected us to do it.

Until recently, the role of mentor in the urban African-American community has been played by nearly all of the working adults whose lives involved contact with young people. Parents, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and neighbors actively conspired to instill a sense of high expectation in the young. Numerous studies of academic achievement—or the lack of it—in the African-American community indicate that students perform on a level appropriate to how they *think* they should perform. If African-American children are nurtured in an atmosphere in which poor performance in school, and in life, is expected, they will internalize those expectations and avoid intellectual engagement and competition, and they will perform poorly. In the extreme, low expectations create children who cannot dream of the future. Only the people who are taught to believe that they have what it takes will have the confidence to take what the future has to offer.

However, a cruel irony casts a cloud over the future for African-American youth. For the first time in this nation's history, we can look forward to 20 or more years in which the job market will expand faster than the working-age population. And yet, as we enter an era of more jobs than people, we find that these jobs require advanced skills and more training than ever before. In order to compete, our young men and women need a level of education previously reserved for the elite.

Mentors can help youngsters understand the nature of the future that lies before them. Those youngsters must then be supported in their attempts to master new skills and close the so-called "performance gap."

If today's African-American youth are to become positive and productive members of society, they need two things: the new skills of our high-tech, information-and-communication-oriented society, and the support and reassurance of successful adult mentors who can help youngsters develop a sense of positive expectations about themselves, their future, and the future of their community.

The mentor has a unique opportunity to be a co-conspirator in a plan to inundate young people with high expectations. Working closely with his or her protege, the African-American mentor to the African-American child can become a "community antibody," helping to resist the plague of negative communication that threatens the self-esteem of a new generation.

So much is written today about the crime, drugs, and violence that assault our urban populations. But not enough is heard about the community-based response, which—in the form of mentoring—can become an effective counterbalance to the negative role modelling and death-wish indoctrination of the drug culture.

Today, a maturing generation of African-American men and women is attempting to instill in the next generation a sense of expectation and opportunity. If they succeed, there is a real ray of hope for African-American children in elementary and secondary schools across America today.

The Fannie Mae Incentive Scholarship Program provides internships, scholarships, mentoring, and enrichment activities for students who maintain high academic averages at H.D. Woodson Senior High School in Washington, DC.

Why Mentoring?

"Many youths grow up with a combination of opportunities and resources to help them, such as family, peers, religious and youth organizations, social agencies and schools. This is not always the case; some youths may not have enough social and personal resources available to them. Planned mentoring programs can help."

—Erwin Flaxman, Columbia University Teachers College

"People Spent Time and Effort on Me...."

Early in Lonnie Edmonson's work with volunteer mentors at Fannie Mae, Edmonson asked a prospective mentor why he was willing to give his time so freely. The response, Edmonson says, is unforgettable:

"In the neighborhood where I grew up, it would have been easy for me to be in Joliet State Prison, as opposed to being here at Fannie Mae today. People spent time and effort on me so I could achieve my potential, and the only way you can repay that is to pass the favor on.

"Our generation is stepping to the forefront, and it's incumbent on us as a generation—and particularly as African-Americans—to make sure that the next generation is better prepared, better schooled, better conditioned to the rigors of life in mainstream America than we were."

Church-Based Group Helps Young Males

It's Wednesday and a group of boys gather for their weekly meeting at the Shiloh Baptist Church Family Life Center in Washington, DC. This evening, they're listening to a funky rap tune—not a top-10 hit but an original song, created by the youths, with a serious message: stay away from drugs.

While this kind of communication may be unusual in some circles, it's getting the message across to these youths, participants in the Black Male Youth Health Enhancement Program—also known as the Male Youth Program (MYP). A multi-faceted approach to at-risk males age 9 through 16, the program was started about five years ago after members of the Center and the Church recognized a lack of positive black role models for African-Amerian young men in Washington.

With funding from the Ford Foundation, the Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation, and the Commission of Public Health, MYP operates through a combination of paid staff and volunteer mentors.

"Our goal is to encourage boys to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles

through knowledge, attitude, and behavior changes," says Director Andre Watson. "We offer a comprehensive year-round roster of cultural, educational, recreational and spiritual activities, including daily study halls, monthly African-American quiz games, free physical examinations, an annual conference, and our weekly Wednesday meeting/workshops: that's a time when the boys, mentors, and staff come together. The workshops provide a forum to discuss relevant issues ranging from teen pregnancy prevention and drug abuse education to values and decision-making."

Mentors like Lynwood Moore, a registered pharmacist, play an integral role in each of these areas. While mentors are also recruited from outside the church community, most—including Moore—are parishioners of the 6,000-member Shiloh Baptist Church.

"It became apparent to me that there is a critical need within the Afro-American community for positive role models," says Moore. "Many of us who are now in the black middle class came from the working class or the underclass. It's critical that we don't lose that link—that we don't forget where we came from."

Moore's way of keeping in touch with his heritage is by serving as a mentor to a group of 9- to 13-year-olds during the Wednesday evening workshops. His role includes working with MYP staff, helping the boys prepare for their weekly presentations, and giving extra attention to boys who have problems or just need a friend. Moore has volunteered for special events—including a Friday night sleep-over where more than 100 boys passed the night by singing songs and playing basketball and other games—and he's hosted a Christmas dinner party at his home for 12 boys.

Recreational activities, however, are usually saved as rewards for boys who have attended the daily after-school study hall. The study hall offers boys an opportunity to get one-on-one or small-group mentoring. Those who attend a predetermined number of sessions, or achieve a certain grade point average, are eligible to participate in an annual summer trip—usually to places the boys might not otherwise visit, for instance, New York City.

Although Andre Watson and his staff have parental permission to receive copies of the boys' report cards and to visit the schools to monitor their progress, they make sure they're not the only source of academic suport. Parents are "strongly encouraged" to attend monthly meetings where they learn about the MYP program and its activities, and about why parents must monitor their children's homework and their attendance at study hall. A monthly parents' newsletter is also available.

"What we've tried to do is create an environment to guide and steer these boys," says Watson. "That's vitally important, especially in Washington, DC where just about every boy and girl is at risk; it's just a matter of degree. We've definitely seen progress in the boys involved with our program. They're better behaved and have a better attitude toward studying."

Watson says future plans call for a comprehensive evaluation to assess how much the boys' grades have improved, and a drive spearheaded by Shiloh Baptist Church to establish similar programs in adjacent communities.

For further information, contact Andre Watson, Director, Black Male Youth Health Enhancement Program, Shiloh Family Life Center, 1510 Ninth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20001. (202) 332-0213

Marking the Passage to Manhood

Borrowing from the age-old Jewish tradition of the "bar mitzvah," MYP has implemented two new programs which mark a boy's transition from boyhood to manhood.

The first is Rites of Passage, a ceremonial acknowledgement of the transition. Twenty 13-year-olds recently participated in a Rites of Passage ceremony.

"The second program, Manhood Training, takes a more comprehensive approach. It actually assists in the transition," says Andre Watson, Director of MYP. "Becoming a man doesn't automatically come with chronological age. We want to address the spirit, mind, and body of a boy so that he can continue to develop and become a more productive, constructive member of society."

Young men enrolled in Manhood Training select a mentor and then work with the mentor and MYP staff to set goals and acquire skills in areas such as cooking, sewing or self-defense; working with charitable organizations; attaining a certain grade point average or reading an agreed-upon number of books; or attending different churches to learn about various religious beliefs.

Florida Group Encourages African-American Excellence

The 5,000 students who have been inducted into the McKnight Achievers Society come from all types of Florida neighborhoods—the projects, the city, and the suburbs—but, despite those differences, they share a vision of the kind of life they want.

Talented, bright, and motivated, the students—most of whom are African-American—are different from many kids involved in mentoring programs, but their need is as great.

"Adult support is particularly important for African-American youth because many African-Americans have historically disdained students who are academic achievers," explains Earl Young. Young is statewide coordinator of a program called Centers of Excellence, of which the McKnight Achievers Society is a component. "There are abundant accolades for African-American student athletes, but not for academically talented students. We reinforce in elementary and secondary school students the idea that it's all right to be academically successful."

Florida's ten Centers of Excellence—supported by both public and private monies under the aegis of the Florida Endowment Fund for Higher Education—function differently and are located in different settings, from colleges to Urban League offices, but they have four common components:

- involving African-American churches
- developing Academic Enrichment Centers
- sponsoring black history and culture competitions
- identifying appropriate students for induction into the McKnight Achievers Society

Although the Centers of Excellence rely on adult supervision and direction for all their programs, it is the McKnight group that most notably utilizes mentoring.

Unlike some mentoring initiatives, many McKnight Achievers ask their parents to serve as mentors—a role which includes supporting and encouraging Achievers, monitoring academic progress, and being actively involved in all phases of the Achievers' lives.

Students inducted into the prestigious

organization must meet stiff requirements—achieving significant academic, artistic and/or cultural accomplishments; maintaining an A or B grade point average, with no less than two As (no Cs are acceptable, unless they have been earned in honors classes); identifying an adult willing to serve as a mentor; and undertaking a yearly community service project.

Achiever activities include field trips to expose students to cultural, educational or artistic experiences; an annual statewide conference; after-school tutoring; quarterly induction ceremonies; and access to the Center's after-school enrichment programs, including language clubs, computer training and educational laboratories where innovative approaches to teaching and learning occur.

In the Mingo household in Gainesville,

McKnight Achiever Eric Peterman, 14

McKnight Achiever Tiffany Ward, 11

for example, McKnight Achiever activities and schoolwork are truly a full-time occupation, since the Mingos are a two-Achiever family.

"We see our role as making Gerald and Ann Marie's education a priority," says their mother, Cynthia. "We try to reduce the amount of stress in their lives so they can concentrate on their homework, and sometimes that involves putting things on the back burner—like housework and chores. When things get too hectic, we all pitch in and help so they can get back to their studies."

In homes such as the Mingos', where praise is frequent and love is abundant, some people may question why a mentoring program is necessary. Eric Peterman, 14, a McKnight Achiever for nearly four years, offers his explanation.

"My mom has encouraged me and instilled the motivation in me to do the best I can," says Eric. "She's had a great impact on my life and I thank her for what she's given me, but sometimes even a parent can't offer everything. It's the combination of my mother and the McKnight Achievers Society that has helped me to learn and experience other things and participate in exciting activities."

"Before he joined the Achievers, Eric earned As and Bs," says Rosie Jones Peterson, Eric's mother. "For the past three years, he's made all As and he studies three to four hours a day. Eric has not only taken a strong interest in becoming the best he can be, he has also been exposed to quite a few different experiences, has had the opportunity to meet very positive role models, and has learned a great deal about his culture."

"I'm glad I've been able to learn about my heritage and to have pride in my roots," says Tiffany Ward, an 11-year-old Achiever who aspires to be a pediatrician. "Most important, the McKnight Achievers have taught me that it's better to study hard than to be on the street taking drugs."

Mary Ward says her daughter, Tiffany, always was a bright kid, but thanks the McKnight Achievers for the incentive she has developed to work even harder.

"I've always encouraged her, but I tried not to push too hard," Mrs. Ward says. "I was glad when a program like McKnight Achievers came along. It has helped her a lot because the smart kids used to be ashamed to be smart."

For more information, contact Earl Young, Statewide Coordinator for Centers of Excellence, Florida Endowment Fund for Higher Education, 201 East Kennedy Boulevard, Suite 1525, Tampa, Florida 33602. (813) 221-2772

Aim High

By George E. Curry
New York Bureau Chief,
Chicago Tribune

Tisha Derricotte, a former participant in a journalism workshop I directed in Washington, DC, decided that she wanted me to serve as her mentor. Newly enrolled at Howard University, Tisha had decided to become a correspondent for Youth News Service, an Associated Press-like national wire service operated by and for teenagers. I was pleased to mentor this talented young woman, but there was one problem: every time Tisha and I were scheduled to work together, she would either fail to appear on time or make excuses about not completing the work.

I finally said to her, "You are obviously not serious about wanting to become a journalist. If you ever decide to get serious, give me a call." As I anticipated, Tisha proclaimed an abiding interest in journalism; I replied, "We'll see..."

And we have: Tisha went on to develop into one of my most dedicated and dependable students. That experience was by no means unique, and it underscores perhaps the most important guideline for mentoring: challenge the student to perform at his or her best. At first, students may rebel; in the end, however, they will be elated, flushed with success. Properly nurtured, their self-esteem and ambition grow tremendously over a very short period—but that same ambition and confidence can be sidetracked by a mentor who talks down to them, feeling, "he (or she) is only a kid."

Some non-minorities have confided to me that, deep down, they have some reluctance about being "too hard" on African-Americans and other minority group members for fear of being labeled racist. I think it's racist *not* to challenge minority students, *not* to force them to perform at their best. I think it's racist to let anything or anyone get in the way of imparting knowledge.

While it's important to be tough on students, it's equally important to help rebuild their confidence. After venting my frustration, I'm likely to say, "I wouldn't be so upset if I thought you weren't capable of doing the work. I *know* you can do better. And you know when you've done your best. Be honest with yourself." After making that pitch, I usually give them another chance to write. When they improve, I am quick to praise. Once their confidence has been restored, we are ready to push forward.

If one is to have a meaningful mentoring

relationship with a student, minority or otherwise, one has to be honest, especially about the prevalance of racism. The minority student who hears from a mentor that racism no longer exists might question that mentor's candor. On the other hand, one can say, "Yes, there is indeed racism in the United States, and it's not likely to go away in your lifetime." Having said that, it's important to add, "You can beat the odds. You can become successful in spite of racism or discrimination."

Students need to be reminded of people who beat the odds every day. Whenever I mentor minority students, I always try to teach by using examples. I have never read anything more moving than Mary Frances Berry recounting her childhood in Barbara Reynolds' book *And Still We Rise*. Berry recalls, "We almost starved... The guy who ran the orphanage would eat pork chops for dinner and then sell the kids the bones." Berry eventually became the first African-American chancellor of the University of Colorado and assistant secretary of education under President Carter. There are many other inspirational stories in Reynolds' book, and they hold special appeal for minority youth.

Like all experienced mentors, I know that not all mentoring relationships work out. But when I think of mentoring, I generally think about the successes. I think about the dozens of former students who have become professional journalists, and about the former students who went on to direct their own journalism workshops.

I have no doubt that Tisha Derricotte will join those "success stories." She has come a long way since I questioned her commitment to journalism. I've never seen her more excited than when she completed her first full-length story for Youth News Service. The story, which Tisha rewrote a half-dozen times, went out all over the country and was reprinted in Tisha's own college newspaper. Next time, when I received a call from Tisha, there were no excuses. She only wanted to know, "What do we do next?"

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This article is excerpted from a new booklet called "The Power of Mentoring," published by the PLUS literacy project. To obtain a copy at no charge, write to PLUS, 4802 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213.

Roles of Mentors

It's common to hear a mentor described as teacher... trainer... sponsor... developer of talent... opener of doors... positive role model... advocate—and friend.

—Adapted from "Mentoring Manual," published by the Abell Foundation, Baltimore, MD

Mentoring Has Group Focus In Michigan Program

The Flint, Michigan Urban League Incentives for Success Program has left an impression hard to ignore—not as the most publicized of mentoring initiatives, and not as the largest, but as a thorough and long-term approach to providing comprehensive assistance to potential high school dropouts from the Flint Community School System.

Although older students are not turned away from the four-year-old program, the preference is to involve students beginning in junior high school and to continue with them until they graduate from high school. Incentives for Success uses a group mentoring approach with its 30 mentees, although the Urban League is trying to build on that concept with one-on-one relationships. Held regularly throughout the year, the group meetings expose students to culturally enriching experiences, improve self-esteem, and develop leadership skills. In order to become and remain group members, students must adhere to a comprehensive set of rules—studying every day, attending all group meetings, promising never to skip school, bringing report cards to the group, and setting academic and study goals.

The rewards, however, are just as sweeping as the rules: students who complete the program in good academic standing will be awarded scholarships to fund their post-high school education.

"The Incentives program cultivates in black youth a sense of self-worth and a positive self-image to better prepare them to compete successfully with their counterparts," explains Deborah Tinsley, educational services representative. "We also try to develop self-discipline and commitment to academic achievement. The weekly meetings establish a positive peer support group where young people can face their problems and deal with them before they become overwhelming."

In addition to the weekly sessions, students can participate in an array of other activities, including peer support sessions, presentations by community volunteers, lessons on African-American history, an annual retreat, tutorial sessions, and field trips.

Eric, 16, has been involved in Incentives for Success since he was in eighth grade, and he hopes a scholarship is in his future. He's enrolled in the Urban League's tutoring sessions and although his grades aren't as high as he'd like them to be, they're getting better.

Eric is fortunate. Unlike many kids whose parents show little encouragement, Eric has strong parental support and positive reinforcement. "My dad compliments me a lot for going to the tutoring sessions," Eric says. "He doesn't want me to end up making the same mistakes he did.

"The workshops are good for me, especially when we talk about what we'll do after high school and college. I'll be in the 'real world' then, and if you don't have a diploma, you're lost. The most important thing for me is that I've learned to have respect for myself and for others and I've learned to be more disciplined," Eric explains.

"The group mentoring process has worked extremely well for us," believes mentor Bonita Bingham. "We use a peer counseling strategy in which we ask questions about what happened in school that week, and we talk about specific problems that have arisen. All of the problems are heard equally and then the group votes and assigns one problem as the priority for the week. At the end of the session, the student has ideas on how to solve the problem."

An economic development planner who knows from experience that it pays to listen to different opinions, Bingham says there are two important rules in group mentoring sessions: everything must remain confidential, and all problems are to be taken seriously. The group atmosphere also presents an opportunity for providing group support and developing listening skills.

"We're seeing very concrete results," Bingham says, "including academic growth and the ability to identify and execute goals. Many of the students have even taken an interest in social and political issues. That's real progress, because some of these kids started with us as eight-graders with an 0.0 grade point average and as members of street gangs. They had no concept of anything beyond themselves. We're teaching them to take responsibility for their actions."

For more information, contact Deborah Tinsley, Educational Services Representative, Urban League of Flint, 202 E. Boulevard Drive, Flint, MI 48503. (313) 239-2195

Origins of Mentoring

The idea of "mentoring" comes from mythology: the hero Ulysses asked his friend Mentor to counsel and guide Ulysses' son Telemachus.

Pat Morita, the wise mentor/coach in the "Karate Kid" movies, hosts "One PLUS One," a documentary about mentoring.

PBS Mentoring Documentary Now Available

An acclaimed hour-long television documentary about mentoring is now available on videotape.

"One PLUS One," which aired on PBS last fall, follows four mentoring relationships through difficulties and joys:

- In Texas, Kim Ulmer helps 11-year-old Cambodian refugee Bun Rath So with progress in school. She also helps Bun Rath's whole family adjust to life in America.
- In Colorado, Lucy Trujillo mentors 17-year-old Anna Hinojos, whose two older sisters dropped out of high school. The relationship is strong and productive—but Anna's future is still uncertain.
- In Indiana, blue-collar worker Bonnie Long mentors an eighth-grader named Mary. Bonnie and Mary have a remarkable friendship, and Bonnie works to help Mary realize that it's hard to find a good job without a high school diploma.
- In Washington, DC, journalist George Curry mentors Howard University freshman Tisha Derricotte, challenging her and demanding the best she can give.

Hosted by Pat Morita, the wise mentor/coach in the "Karate Kid" movies, "One PLUS One" is available for $25. To order or for further information, call or write Project PLUS, 4802 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15213. (412) 622-1491.

From Doubt to Friendship

By Malcolm B. Maxwell, Jr.
Student, Indiana University Northwest

As a high school student, Malcolm Maxwell was mentored through the Career Beginnings Program, which builds career and educational support systems for high school students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

When I first learned that I was going to receive a mentor I was kind of skeptical; in fact, I really didn't want one. I didn't want another person in my life telling me how I could better myself in school; what roads I should take as far as going to college; where to go to school and why. In my book, that's what my parents were for. And if my parents weren't around, I could always go to one of my family members or a friend. I knew that having this mentor would only mean having another PERSON speaking to me, with everything he said going in one ear and out of the other.

Not long after the first Career Beginnings meeting, I received my first job assignment at the Northwest Indiana Forum, a private, economic development group with the objective of attracting industry to the three counties of Northwest Indiana. I was to collect news articles relative to economic activity in the area. I think what made this job very special was the fact that I was treated as more than just a high school student. For instance, I was given my own office. My co-workers were all friendly and enthusiastic people who were always encouraging.

It was at the Forum that I met Robert Hechlinski, the man who would become my mentor. From the start, Bob was kind to me and easy to talk with. When I learned he was also to become my mentor, I was anxious to know if his attitude might change because we would be working closely together for the whole year. As it turned out, this would be the start of a friendship that would go far beyond the time I spent at the Forum.

When my parents first learned that I was going to be assigned to a mentor they were curious and afraid. They thought that there was going to be this stranger who was going to be telling their son how, where and when to do things that had to do with his future. They didn't want somebody steering me into a direction that might not be good for me. They also didn't want someone coming in and trying to fill their role. As it turned out, my parents and I found out that our fears were unnecessary.

Robert Hechlinski was more than an employer—he was a wonderful gentleman. As my mentor, Bob was an exceptional influence on my life. Whenever I was confused as to what direction I should take, he was one of the few people that I could look forward to for sound and thoughtful advice. There was never a conversation where Bob would talk "at me." We always had discussions where we could freely exchange thoughts and ideas. If ever there was a difference of opinion, he would still respect my viewpoint although he didn't agree with it. It is important that interns not look at their mentors as just another adult who doesn't understand, but as someone who can point to another aspect of the situation.

Bob and I participated fully in the Career Beginnings program offerings. We attended all the workshops and seminars. We took advantage of the College Career Day. During those three summer months, Bob and I would take every available opportunity to discuss my future. This might be during the quiet of the early morning before work started, or long after everyone went home. Sometimes it would be during the work day when we would both put aside our duties. Or, over a lunch just between the two of us where we had the privacy to concentrate on the problems at hand. We even had a chance to go fishing.

In my opinion, mentors must keep in mind that mentoring is not an opportunity to force their ideas and views on someone less experienced, but, hopefully, to act as a sounding board and become a positive role model. Because my mentor gave me these considerations, I enjoyed the most important thing in the Career Beginnings program—which was not a paycheck as I originally thought, but ties with people who were generous with their time and truly concerned for my life and my future, primarily Bob.

It became very apparent to me that the time Bob spent with me was time that was taken away from his family. I felt a growing indebtedness as the program progressed. Bob sensed this discomfort. He told me that an obligation was growing on my part. He asked me to repay this debt in the future, not to him, but to someone who may need my guidance as much as I needed his. I intend to make that payment... with interest!

This article was excerpted from a new booklet called "The Power of Mentoring," published by the PLUS literacy project. To obtain a copy at no charge, write to PLUS, 4802 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh PA 15213.

Interested in Mentoring? Resources Are Available

One PLUS One, the PLUS mentoring project, has developed a number of publications and tapes with information and advice for school/community/business leaders, mentors, and mentoring program directors. They include:

Print

Beginning a Mentoring Program. Advice for launching a program, including tips on assessment, staffing, recruiting, matching, and funding. Many sample forms are included.

The Power of Mentoring with an introduction by Lee Iacocca. Collection of essays by several professionals, a mentor, and a mentee.

A Special Report on Mentoring from Project PLUS and the ASPIRA Association. Newsletter with features on how mentoring serves the Hispanic community.

A Special Report on Mentoring from Project PLUS and the National Education Association. Newsletter with features on how mentoring serves the school community.

A Special Report on Mentoring from Project PLUS and the National Urban League. Newsletter with features on how mentoring seves the African-American community.

A Youth Mentoring Program Directory. compiled by One PLUS One and United Way of America. Lists national and local mentor programs with contact names and addresses.

Orientation/Training Videos

Milestones in Mentoring. Series of three video programs to orient mentors: "Dealing with Diversity" (30 minutes), "Making It Work" (60 minutes), and "Troubled Families" (30 minutes).

Print guidelines accompany the programs, which are distributed on one cassette. Produced by One PLUS One with The Buddy System.

Other Videos

(All under 30 minutes)
College Students as Mentors
The Importance of Mentors in the Public School System
Mentoring African-American Youth
Mentoring Hispanic Youth

For more information on any of these resources, call or write:

One PLUS One
4802 Fifth Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 622-1491

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